



**CIVIL SOCIETY
FINANCING FOR
DEVELOPMENT**
Mechanism

ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FfD4)

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Intervention delivered at the Special High-Level meeting with the WTO and UNCTAD, Focus on the implementation of the Sevilla Commitment actions on trade.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues, I am honoured for the opportunity for a few remarks on the question of international trade as an engine for development in changing global landscape.

These discussions are taking place at the time when international trade regime has become an arena and instrument of fierce battles for geo-political hegemony. Some big powers brazenly combine abuse of various instruments of trade policy with other forms of direct coercion to extract concessions in and access to markets and key resources for themselves. Opponents deploy more subtle devices of their own to ensure continued access to and/or dominance over the same resources and markets.

As we all know a control critical mineral resources, technology and economics is at the heart of the veritable trade wars that we're witnessing.

Third party countries, especially in the global south are targets of this big power scramble for critical mineral resources.

As a result, the multilateral trade regime and the basic principles and procedures for effective democratic participation are under the severest attack. At the 14th Ministerial Conference of WTO in March in Cameroun, which ended in deadlock, the world's biggest trading powers, from North America, to Europe and Asia took turns to promote proposals whose effect is to undermine the fundamental pillars of the WTO, including especially consensus-based decision making, the single-undertaking, the principles of special and differential treatment and so on.

While disguised in the language of reform and ranging in style from the most brazen to the most subtle, these proposals promote the interests of the big powers, at the expense of the ability of the vulnerable majority of developed and least developed country members to effectively participate and promote their interests. In fact, these proposals side-line the efforts of developing and least developed countries since 1996 to redress the fundamental imbalance of power and benefits that has undermined the effective pursuit of their interests and benefits in the WTO.

The agenda and efforts of the big powers is set to continue in Geneva. And thus, for the foreseeable future, the big powers will continue their attack on the WTO, in pursuit of their interest, and at the expense of interest and efforts of developing and least developed countries for equity.

But what is happening in the WTO is repeated outside in free-trade agreements and bilateral deals. Here again the biggest trade powers continue to weaponize trade policy to coercively extract concessions from smaller players. And so-called middle powers take advantage of the ensuing chaos to pursue their own interests along similar lines.

The irony here is what we in the FFD space propose to do in the face of this development. Here the draft outcome document for this forum does something strange. It simply takes “note of the Ministerial Decisions adopted at the World Trade Organization Fourteenth Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé in March 2026 and look forward to further progress in finalizing the Yaoundé package.” It acknowledges “that the WTO faces serious challenges that require necessary reform to improve all its functions and underscore the importance of engaging constructively at the World Trade Organization in an inclusive, transparent, and member-driven process in order to achieve meaningful outcomes to strengthen the World Trade Organization and advance its reform”.

Not only does this essentially turn a blind eye to the attack on the interest of the vulnerable majority, but in fact adopts the very language of the bigger powers and thus legitimises their agenda.

This posture repeats the regressive tendency that started in with Compromiso de Seville, when in the face of the big-power abuse of tariffs and other trade policy, all talk of addressing the inequities of the global system were dropped in favour of a simple concern to save the system as it is, with all its imbalances.

The same applies to our position on critical minerals.

Here too the Outcome document repeats the weak provisions of the Compromiso de Seville, which pays little attention to the changes in the international trade regime necessary to support developing countries in use of these resources for their development, but actually promotes domestic deregulation to facilitate foreign investment.

In the light of all this, a question must confront us above all. In this forum, in this organisation whose fundamental mission is to enable the world's majority to effectively participate in and benefit from the global economic order, are we going to continue to focus on and dance around a narrow, slender formula of piece-meal efforts, when the whole house is threatened from its foundations? Or are we going to do what is right, confront the ensuing global trade warfare, and take a conscious stand on the side of the developing and least developed countries?

One thing is clear. We need to return to fundamental principles and norms of global equity and global solidarity which have animated and should continue to animate the Financing for Development agenda. Otherwise surely, we would be colluding on the erosion of the legitimacy of the whole FfD enterprise as we know it.

Thank you.